

# SAVED BY THE CROSS

April 9, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

At the commencement of Holy Week, it is very important to focus our hearts on the cross and the resurrection. The writer of our passage, (Luke) interviewed eyewitnesses, his writings are an eye-witness account and record of these events.

Our focus today is the cross, but we'll be looking at three crosses and the men who were nailed on them. The two men who were on either side of Jesus were called "criminals", but their titles will tell us much more about them, in a minute. As we read our passage, see if you see yourself in either one of these criminals...or maybe both!

*"Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."*

*"The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

*There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews."*

*"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:32-43)*

One man that hung on the cross beside Jesus saw clearly the evil and unjust world around him as well as his own suffering and couldn't bring himself to believe in God...even though God was only a few feet away from him.

However, the other man who lived in the same world began to see something that would change his life and eternity. Although Jesus would speak to the father again from the cross, this would be the last conversation to another human while alive on earth.

How would he respond to Jesus: how would you/we respond? Let's get a peek into who these guys were in that society by looking at the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark:

*"They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left." (Mark 15:27)*

*In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him." (Matthew 27:44)*

"**Lestes**": Rebel, violent, terrorist, killed people, revolted against Rome.

*"Two other men, both criminals..." (Luke 23:32)*

"**Kakourgos**": Somebody who does bad, evil and violent things.

So we have two very violent men, who were considered terrorist who revolted against Rome and had more than likely murdered at least one person and yet Jesus was the one who was being mocked and taunted.

Let's look at the other groups around the cross:

- **Religious leaders (Luke 23:35)**

"The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

- **Soldiers (Luke 23:36-37)**

"The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

- **Criminals (Luke 23:39)**

"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

### **HE DIDN'T COME TO SAVE HIMSELF HE CAME TO SAVE US.**

As we look at all the comments made to Jesus on the cross, we begin to see a pattern and a connection to another conversation year's earlier. "Let him save himself", "If you are...", "Save yourself". As stated earlier, he didn't come to save himself, he came to save us. But it's so much more than saving us from hell; it's showing us what sacrificial love really looks like.

But we've heard a very similar conversation right after Jesus was baptized. Satan would say to Jesus, "If you're the son of God..." Satan tempted Jesus to take a short-cut. At any moment Jesus could have called legions of angels to stop everything, but he finished his painful mission for our salvation.

**"Aren't' you glad that Jesus didn't step down from the cross but gave His all?"**

**"You will find in Jesus what you have not found in life...grace, mercy and love"**

As we consider the two criminals, we see one of them making accusations at Jesus. Although we really don't want to identify with this criminal, how many times have we pointed our finger at God making accusations about our circumstances?

At times our eyes are opened to our need for him and the cross. This was the worst of circumstances, but what he saw in Jesus he had never seen before.

**"What if life has left you broken and abandoned, but not God?"**

**"Remember" - a big word in the bible. When God remembers, He delivers.**

This is not God saying "I forgot", but "I remember". The second criminal said to Jesus, "remember me" and Jesus responded to his "repentance".

***"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)***

**Repentance: "Metanoeo" = to think differently after**

**Meta - after**

**Anoeo - to think**

**"No one is beyond God's redemptive grace...if you are willing to come back. You cannot go so far that God cannot save you if you will turn to Jesus and cry out, 'save me.'**

- Reverence for God

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved."

- Admittance of sin
- Believing rightly about Jesus
- A humble trust in Jesus

**IF JESUS HASN'T SPOKEN WHATEVER WORD YOU'RE LIVING UNDER, THEN IT'S NOT THE LAST WORD, BECAUSE HE'S GOING TO GET THE LAST WORD OVER YOUR LIFE**

*"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)*

People have spoken things at you and over you, you may have had cancer spoken over you and sometimes we even think and say things about ourselves. But this is not the last word; Jesus has the last word over your life. It's not over because Jesus hasn't spoken yet.

Jesus is saying Father would you accept this man, he/they/you are my friend/s, they are under my blood. He specifically told this second man that he wasn't a criminal, a thief, a rebel or a terrorist, you are my friend, today you will be with me!

**THERE'S SOMETHING FAR GREATER FOR YOU AND ME THAN JUST GETTING INTO HEAVEN AT THE END OF THE STORY, IT IS GETTING CONNECTED TO JESUS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION THAT WE FIND OURSELVES IN RIGHT NOW.**

**"This is the gospel. It's not just that you go to heaven when you die; it's that you get personally connected to the risen Lord while you live"**

*"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

*The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things." (Luke 23:44-49)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. As you think about Jesus on the cross and the two men beside him, what are some initial thoughts as we read our passage?
2. Looking at page two of our notes what do we learn about these two men? They found themselves in almost identical situations and yet one is taunting Jesus and the other is changing his life and eternity. Additionally, what do we learn about who these men when considering the original language?
3. Starting on page three and four of our notes Randy identifies three groups of people standing around Jesus and basically saying the same things. These sound eerily similar to another conversation a couple of years earlier. What was the temptation for Jesus on both occasions? Also what do these statements speak to your heart?  
**"He didn't come to save Himself He came to save us"**  
**"Aren't' you glad that Jesus didn't step down from the cross but gave His all"?**
4. We begin to see a beautiful picture of an exhausted Jesus who is on the doorstep of death and his last conversation with a human will be this criminal. On page four we find this quote:  
**"You will find in Jesus what you have not found in life...grace, mercy and love"** Also refer to page four as the two men are compared, but what did the second man see that the first didn't?
5. As we look at the bottom of page four, continuing to page five, discuss the two words; "remember" and "repent" and how they fit into our story.
6. On the bottom of page five of your notes, we learn a very crucial truth:  
**"If Jesus hasn't spoken whatever word you're living under, then it's not the last word, because He's going to get the last word over your life"**  
This was the most meaningful thing that the Holy Spirit spoke to me during the lesson. What has been spoke to or over you? Also what has Jesus spoken over you...because he has the last word.